PRINT CULTURE AND THE MODERN WORLD

Write in Brief:

Q. 1. Give reasons for the following

(a) Woodblock print only came to Europe after 1295

(b) Martin Luther was in favour of print and spoke out in praise of it.

(c) The Roman Catholic Church began keeping an Index of Prohibited books from the mid-sixteenth century.

(d) Gandhi said the fight for Swaraj is a fight for liberty of speech, liberty of the press, and freedom of association.

Ans. (a) Woodblock print was invented around the sixth century in China. It came to Europe, along with Marco Polo, in 1295. Marco Polo returned to Italy after many years of exploration in China, and he brought the knowledge of woodblock print with him on his return.

(b) Martin Luther was in favour of print and spoke out in praise of it because print media helped popularise and spread his ideas. In 1517, he wrote the Ninety Five Theses, criticising the practices and rituals of the Roman Catholic Church. These writings were immediately reproduced in vast numbers and read widely. His translation of the New Testament was also accepted and read by thousands. This was only possible due to the improvements in print technology which had allowed even the working classes to gain access to books.

(c) The Roman Catholic Church began keeping an index of Prohibited books from the mid-sixteenth century because its authority was being put in danger by the several individual and distinctive readings and questionings of faith prompted by the easily accessible popular religious literature. To supplement its inquisition and repression of heretical ideas, the Roman

Catholic Church exercised strict control over publishers and booksellers, and also began to keep an Index of Prohibited Books from 1558.

(d) Gandhi said the fight for Swaraj is a fight for liberty of speech, liberty of the press, and freedom of association because he considered these to be powerful modes of expression and cultivation of public opinion. The denial of these freedoms was not compatible with the idea of self rule and independence. Hence, the fight for these freedoms, according to him, was intrinsically a fight for Swaraj or self rule.

Q. 2. Write short notes to show what you know about:

(a) The Gutenberg Press

(b) Erasmus's idea of the printed book

(c) The Vernacular Press Act

Ans. (a) The Gutenberg Press: It was established by Johann Gutenberg. By 1448, he had perfected the system of printing with olive and wine presses, using contemporary technological innovations. The first book that he printed was the Bible, making 180 copies in 3 years. Although these books were printed, a unique touch remained in the handmade decorations of the front page, illuminated borders and purchaser-specified designs. The Gutenberg Press was the first-known printing press in the 1430s.

(b) Erasmus's idea of the printed book: He was critical of the print medium. He believed that though some books do provide worthwhile knowledge, others are simply a bane for scholarship. Erasmus accused printers of publishing books that were not mere trifling but "stupid, slanderous, scandalous, raving, irreligious and seditious". He also felt that large numbers of such books reduce the value of the quality writings.

(c) The Vernacular Press Act: Modeled on the Irish Press Laws, it was passed in 1878. This law gave the government tyrannical rights to censor reports

and editorials in the vernacular press. If a seditious report was published and the newspaper did not heed to an initial warning, then the press was seized and the printing machinery confiscated. This was a complete violation of the freedom of expression.

Q. 3. What did the spread of print culture in nineteenth century India mean to:

(a) Women (b) The poor (c) Reformers

Ans. (a) Women: The spread of print culture in nineteenth-century India brought about educational reforms for women. Liberal husbands and fathers educated their womenfolk at home or sent them to schools for women. Women who had been restricted to a domestic life for generations, now found a new medium of entertainment. They also began to write articles for journals, in favour of women's education and literacy. Some even wrote books; Rashsundari Devi's autobiography "Amar Jiban" was the first full-length autobiography, published in 1876. Conservatives believed that education and reading would make women widows, or corrupt them. Many women learnt to read and write in secret in such traditionalist environments.

(b) The poor: They benefitted from the spread of print culture in India on account of the availability of low-price books and public libraries. Enlightening essays were written against caste discrimination and its inherent injustices. These were read by people across the country. On the encouragement and support of social reformers, over-worked factory workers set up libraries for self-education, and some of them even published their own works, for example, Kashibaba and his "Chhote Aur Bade Sawal".

(c) Reformers: Print culture's popularity was an advantage for social and religious reformers as they could now spread their opinions, through

newspapers and books, across the masses. These ideas could then be debated upon by different groups of people. Reformist ideas were put forward in the local, everyday languages of the common people so as to create a wider platform for the same.

Discuss

Q. 1. Why did some people in eighteenth century Europe think that print culture would bring enlightenment and end despotism?

Ans. Some people in eighteenth-century Europe thought that print culture would bring enlightenment and end despotism. Its easy and cheap availability meant that literacy would no longer be restricted to the upper classes. While the clergy and monarchs feared the enlightenment that a vast reading public would gain, reformers like Martin Luther welcomed the change. They felt that it would mark an end to the blind adherence to the rulers' ideology. This can be seen in the French Revolution as well. The print medium allowed the ideals of freedom, equality and brotherhood set forth by Rousseau and Voltaire in their writings to reach the public. It created a new culture of dialogue and debate that initiated the working class into questioning and re-evaluating social customs and norms. The power of reason that the public gained initiated social reform, and brought an end to despotism.

Q. 2. Why did some people fear the effect of easily available printed books? Choose one example from Europe and one from India.

Ans. The people who feared the effect of easily available printed books were the ones who held some power, whether in terms of religion, caste, class or politics. The fear was that their power and authority would get eroded if ideas questioning their power and authority gained mass popularity. In

Europe, for example, the Roman Catholic Church conveyed its sense of apprehension for the print medium by stating that the promotion of new "printed" readings of faith would lead to blasphemous questionings of faith and encourage heretical ideas. It considered itself to be the sole authority for interpreting religion. Hence, it set up the Index of Prohibited Books in 1558 to repress any published material that it felt corroded this authority.

In India, apart from the colonial government which did its bit in regulating and suppressing newspapers and books that questioned and criticised colonial authority, the religious leaders and the upper castes also displayed their fear of the print medium. They understood that their religious and social superiority was in danger due to the easily accessible "printed" ideas contradicting their systems of beliefs. They knew that the popularisation of such ideas would incite people to rebellion.

Q. 3. What were the effects of the spread of print culture for poor people in nineteenth century India?

Ans. The poor people benefitted from the spread of print culture in India on account of the availability of low-price books and public libraries. Enlightening essays were written against caste discrimination and its inherent injustices. These were read by people across the country. On the encouragement and support of social reformers, over-worked factory workers set up libraries for self-education, and some of them even published their own works, for example, Kashibaba and his “Chhote Aur Bade Sawal”.

Q. 4. Explain how print culture assisted the growth of nationalism in India.

Ans. Print culture assisted the growth of nationalism in India by providing easy access to nationalist ideals and ideas of freedom and equality to the masses. Social reformers could now print their opinions in newspapers, which sparked off public debates. The power of reason made the common people question the authority of colonial power. Interestingly, when the British tried to censor and control print media, nationalist newspapers grew in number everywhere in the country. They reported on colonial misrule and encouraged people to participate in nationalist activities. Attempts to censor anti-colonial publications aroused militant protests as well.

PROJECT WORK

Q. Find out more about the changes in print technology in the last 100 years. Write about the changes, explaining why they taken place, what their consequences have been.

Ans. As the project makes a query upon the last 100 years, we mean it, the period beginning with twentieth century; we would like to discuss further changes that came in printing technology in the following points:

(i) In the twentieth century, the development of newsprint, paper and printing technology connected with books, together with photography and sound engineering have opened up, new era of printing press which has tremendous potentiality to remove illiteracy and expand the scope of education.

(ii) Presses began electrically operated during those periods.

(iii) Offset press was already developed in the last nineteenth century. It was capable to print upto six colours at a time.

(iv) Other developments in printing technology can be started as—(a) improvement in method of feeding paper, (b) improvement in plate quality,

(c) introduction of automatic paper reels and (d) introduction of phoelectric control of colour prints viz, the process of colour arrangements.

(v) These changes came because increase in number of authors commentators, critics, novelists, historian poets, missionaries and theologists. Root these developments is the invention of paper in East Asia (China) and then Chinese first attempt to compose words on paper. Papyrus the living plant and its inventor are therefore first worthy to thanks. Former sacrificed body (physique) and the latter sacrificed temporal sentiments at the altar of finding something so vital to mankind.

Cause for Change: Gregarious instinct within each individual, like other organism unites him with society that embraces family nation and the whole world in its vast import. It is language intertwined with words that contributes large in writing them. It was therefore, necessity felt to expand contacts, aricultatlons, relationships through means that would bear spoken words in signs symbols viz. in black and white. As initial prints made certain auspicious changes in society, It proceeded by leaps and bounds.

At present, with the pace of human minds polluted in coalieries of passions, ignorance mores, print culture is also polluted. Travesty tamper, dub, prying, espionage; peeping /peering into short-cuts are the bacterias causing T.B. to Print Culture.

Multiple Choice Questions:

(i) From which country did the earliest kind of print technology develop?

(a) China (c) India

(b) Japan (d) Germany'

(ii) To which country did Gutenberg belong?

(a) France (c) England

(b) Italy (d) Germany

(iii) Which was the first book published by Gutenberg?

(a) Mahabharata (c) David Copperfield

(b) Bible (d) Gita

(iv) Who criticized many of the rituals and practices of the Roman Catholic Church?

(a) Gutenberg (d) Richard M. Howe

(b) James Watt (d) Martin Luther

(v) Who started Bengal Gazette as a weekly publication?

(a) Raja Rammohan Roy (c) Hicky

(b) Fardoonji Murzben (d) Vir Rajhavachari

(vi) Which two papers were the mouthpieces of Gandhiji's philosophy?

(a) Young India and Harijan

(b) Maratha and Kesari

(c) Kavivachan Sudha and Hindi Pradeep

(d) Harijan and Independent India

(vii) Who, among the following, was appointed the first Indian Law Member?

(a) Motilal Nehru c) Jawaharlal Nehru

(b) Tej Bahadur Sapru d) Maulana Azad

Ans. (i) a; (ii) d; (iii) b; (iv) d; (v) c; (vi) a; (vii) a.

Fill in the Blanks:

(a) K.M. Panikkar edited English daily __________.

(b) Dadabhai Naoroji edited the __________.

(c) Mr. Hicky was arrested by ____________ since he criticized his policies.

(d) Indian Press Act was signed in the __________.

Ans. (a) Hindustan Times; (b) Rast Goftar; (c) Warren Hastings; (d) 1910.